



RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Carver, A. B., & McCarty, J. A. (2013). Personality and psychographics of three types of gamblers in the United States. *International Gambling Studies*, 13(3), 338-355. doi:10.1080/14459795.2013.819933

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Which personality traits are related to regular participation in lotteries, casino gambling, and online gambling? How do the personalities and attitudes of regular lottery, online, and casino gamblers compare to casual and non-gamblers?

PURPOSE

Gambling opportunities are increasing in the United States, with more legalized casinos and lotteries, as well as more opportunities for online gambling. Research to date has not fully explained how individual personality traits, attitudes, and beliefs differ among people who prefer different forms of gambling. This study examined differences in personality traits among frequent online, casino, and lottery gamblers. This study also compared personality traits of frequent gamblers to casual gamblers and non-gamblers.

HYPOTHESIS

None stated.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 24,581 American adults who responded to the nationally representative Simmons National Consumer Study in 2007/2008.

PROCEDURE

US households were selected through national stratified sampling, random digit dialing, and a telephone-based screening interview. Next, qualifying participants were sent a survey package by mail. The survey package contained questions about consumer habits and characteristics, including gambling habits and personality traits.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Personality traits were measured using self-report survey questions related to impulsiveness, need for control, materialism, risk-taking, self-centredness, introversion, sensation seeking, and materialism. Type and frequency of gambling behaviour were measured using self-report questions, and these

responses were used to categorize participants as lottery, online, casino, casual, and non-gamblers. Specifically, the researchers identified groups of regular lottery players who did not visit casinos or gamble online, frequent casino gamblers (10+ visits per year) who did not gamble online, and online gamblers who had gambled via the internet in the last month. Casual gamblers were infrequent participants in casino, lottery, or online gambling. Non-gamblers had not participated in any form of gambling in the past year.

KEY RESULTS

All gambler groups (casino, lottery, online, and casual) reported higher levels of impulsivity than non-gamblers, and frequent gamblers showed more impulsivity than casual gamblers. Similarly, all gambler groups (casino, lottery, online, and casual) reported higher levels of risk-taking than non-gamblers; casino and online gamblers reported higher risk-taking than casual gamblers. All gambler groups also showed higher levels of materialism than non-gamblers. Online gamblers had different personality profiles than regular casino and lottery gamblers, such that online gamblers showed higher levels of desire for control, higher self-centredness, and higher risk-taking, as compared to other groups. Sensation seeking was also higher among online gamblers, but this was likely due to the relatively young age of the online gambler group. There was no evidence that online gamblers were more introverted than other groups. Regular casino and lottery gamblers formed a fairly similar group in terms of personality traits, except that there was some evidence that lottery gamblers were more introverted than casino gamblers.

LIMITATIONS

This study relied on secondary data from a consumer marketing survey, so the researchers did not have direct control over questions asked of participants. As a result, personality traits were not assessed using validated scales and not all personality traits relevant to gambling were assessed in this study. These findings apply only to US adults and should not be

generalized to gamblers and gambling contexts other countries.

CONCLUSIONS

People who prefer online gambling appear to have distinct personality profiles compared to people who prefer lottery and casino gambling. These findings suggest that people are drawn to the anonymity of online gambling for reasons of control, rather than introversion. Future research should take care to

assess demographics as well as attitudes and beliefs related to gambling.

KEYWORDS: gambling, personality, lotteries, casino, internet gambling

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